

we can come to some agreement. It certainly is within reach. But not if we are dictated to with regard to the text of the amendments.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak—

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object—

Mr. LOTT. For up to 10 minutes each. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant minority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before the two leaders leave the floor, I want to say, first of all, the Democratic leader is being so generous. We, the Democrats, 44 of us, follow him in lockstep. But the fact is, he has gone a long ways towards accommodating the majority leader.

I would just say this in passing: If we are going to be logical about this debate, then if you look at the underlying bill, that is the marriage tax penalty the Republicans are pushing forward, you will find 60 percent of it is not relevant to the marriage tax penalty—60 percent of it is not relevant. So if he is talking about relevancy, which I think should have no bearing on the proceedings here, 60 percent of their own underlying bill is not relevant.

So I think, I repeat, our leader has been so generous, trying to move things along. I think his statement is underlined by all the other 44 Democratic Senators. We support every step he has made. We think he is doing the right thing in protecting the prerogatives of the Senate, having this debate in the Senate where there is free debate. We are not even asking for free debate; we are asking there be some debate, which is not being allowed.

VISIT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA, ANDRES PASTRANA

Mr. L. CHAFEE. Mr. President, as chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, it is a great pleasure to welcome the President of Colombia to the Senate of the United States. I have been listening with rapt attention. He has been trying to explain to us his hopes for the future.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I join my distinguished colleague from Rhode Island, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs; along with the chairman of the full committee, Senator HELMS; the

distinguished majority leader; the minority leader; and other colleagues who are here—Senator BIDEN—in extending a very warm welcome to the distinguished President.

We have great admiration for him and the people of Colombia. The struggle in which we are all engaged affects all of us in this hemisphere, particularly those in the United States. And we know we are going to do everything we possibly can to see to it the support of the United States is forthcoming to President Pastrana and the people of Colombia.

Mr. President, you are warmly welcome here today. We are delighted you are with us.

RECESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate recess for 2 minutes for the purpose of the Senate welcoming and receiving to the U.S. Senate, the President of Colombia, President Andres Pastrana.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:23 p.m., recessed until 5:28 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. VOINOVICH).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I seek to be recognized to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

THE MARRIAGE PENALTY TAX

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I appreciate the leadership on both sides and their discussion on us moving forward and dealing with the marriage penalty tax. I am glad we are finally coming together, but I would note the Senator from South Dakota has put forward, on behalf of the Democrat side, 10 amendments on this issue. Many of these are not directly relevant to what we are trying to get done. With all due respect to him putting these forward, and I appreciate them working with us some, we have a pretty direct issue in front of us. It is the marriage tax penalty.

To tie with it a discussion on prescription drugs, to tie with it discussions on Medicare, on Social Security priorities, on a college tuition tax credit, on conservation reserve programs, on the natural disaster assistance program, really just goes contrary, completely, to us ultimately trying to get this bill through.

What we have before us is a marriage tax penalty. We have two alternatives put forward by the Democrat Party. That is good. I think we can have good, direct, clear votes on that, and then we can press forward.

With all due respect to the Democratic leader, to call this a risky tax

strategy, I think what is at risk if we do not deal with the marriage tax penalty is the institution of marriage in this country. What has happened is there is the fall-off in the number of people getting married, and then we tax them on top of that. That is risky.

They have said a number of times that 52 percent does not deal with the marriage tax penalty. It is all directly applicable to the marriage tax penalty.

The Democratic proposal actually enshrines in law a new homemaker penalty; that is, when one of the spouses decides to stay at home and take care of the children. The Democrat proposal makes families with one wage earner and one stay-at-home spouse pay higher taxes than a family with two wage earners earning the same income. Why discriminate against one-wage-earner families? That is a direct connection to the marriage tax penalty. That is a marriage tax penalty taking place with the one-wage-earner family.

Why do we want a Tax Code that penalizes families because one spouse chooses to work hard at home and one chooses to work hard outside the home? I do not see why we would want to do that.

There are a lot of things I like about the Democratic alternative, as far as doing away with the marriage tax penalty in a number of other places in the Tax Code. This notion of penalizing a single-wage-earner family is really not something we should be pressing.

More to the point, it makes the entire issue of the marriage tax penalty, all 100 percent of the tax cut, relevant to marriage. They are saying 52 percent of it is not relevant to the family. It is directly relevant to that one-wage-earner family. In many of those cases, they are saying it is not.

The other point, and I do not think it needs to be belabored: If we are ready to pass marriage tax penalty relief and both sides agree we need to pass marriage tax penalty relief, why would we take up a series of additional amendments on Medicaid, prescription drugs, Social Security, college tuition tax credit, Conservation Reserve Program, natural disaster assistance? Those are not relevant to the issue. We have a chance to do this particular issue, agree or disagree.

If the Democrats think this is too rich, let's vote on their bill; let's have a vote on it. We have the chance now to do that, to hone in on that. I am fearful that what I am seeing is more a block to dealing with the marriage tax penalty.

Mr. LOTT. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BROWNBACK. I will be delighted to yield.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I asked the Senator to yield because I very much agree with what he is saying and want to emphasize a couple points.

There is a Democrat alternative. I indicated even yesterday we would be